

On Aesthetic Conception of the Ontological Foundation of Classical Chinese Literature

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ABSTRACT

There are prolific and profound aesthetic thoughts concerning the ontological foundation of Chinese classical literature. The objective of this paper is to analyze its aesthetic conception and try to seek the approaches to its identification and implications. Three dimensions of the aesthetic conception will be articulated: (1) poetic expressions for sense perception are highlighted as the phenomenal aesthetic dimension of literary texts, reservation and ambiguity of which are taken as the aesthetic realm of its unique poetic wisdom and empiricism; (2) the reflective-spiritual aesthetic dimension of treatises originated from the literary texts guides the ideological molding of the deep and the hidden in terms of the great aesthetic power; (3) its moral-ethical aesthetic dimension is directed at issues of social-ritual activities and daily practice. Correspondingly, to respond to the challenges of approaching classical Chinese literature, this paper advocates a proposal of three levels of resolution: interpreting terms and expressions with language analysis, accomplishing the construction of systematic thoughts and notions with holistic epistemology and reverting its highest functions of ontological and aesthetic concerns to life form.

Keywords: Poetic expression, reflective-spiritual, moral-ethical, holistic, life form

INTRODUCTION

Globalization process most advanced in the economic and technological spheres also penetrate into the sphere of culture. Since the aesthetics of literature and art is particularly telling the manifestation of a culture, it is urgent to probe into the identification and implications of the aesthetic conception of the ontological foundations of classical Chinese literature, which reveals the essence of Chinese culture, a culture of enormous or radical difference from Western culture. Ken-ichi Sasaki (2006), president of International Association of Aesthetics, once declared on the Beijing international symposium of “Aesthetics and Culture: East and West” in 2002:

I am profoundly convinced that modern western civilization is something exceptional in human history. But most people recognized that we can no longer continue along the same lines and that we have to create a new civilization. To create a new civilization means create a new philosophy of the management of human kind.... Because the materials for a new creation should always be found in the accumulated history of culture and China is very rich in such history. (p-2)

To overcome the human pale of the modern mind in the dominating Western culture, many people turn to Chinese culture. Sonja Servomaa illustrates the Chinese concepts and Daoism to interpret the poetic wisdom in Chinese literary text; J.J. Clark describes the necessity to integrate human existence “more intimately with nature” from the perspective of the Chinese philosophy; David Brubaker seeks the points of similarities between Merleau-Ponty’s writings and the texts of traditional Chinese philosophy to exemplify an Asian content in a

Western application.... In terms of appreciating and interpreting its aesthetic conception and its implications of the ontological foundations of classical Chinese literature, I will try to develop a hypothesis of its three aesthetic dimensions and three corresponding levels of approaches to explore it in the context of globalization era.

Classical Chinese literature emphasizes poetic expressions for sense perception. This aesthetic dimension has a far-reaching historical foundation, long standing and hard to waver. Since the ancient times, Chinese people had a preference for an indirect metaphoric mode of expressions and perception with emphasis on the sensory organs. In this sense, *the Book of Song* (Shi Jing), the earliest anthology of poems in China during the period from Zhou Dynasty to the medium Spring and Autumns times (from the tenth to sixth century B.C.), lays a solid foundation for specific techniques of stimulation with poetic expressions for sense perception, a significant way of inspiring or associating. Consequently, the perfection of a text depends to a great degree on the expertise of the author who is skilled in using the techniques of stimulation. The recognition of the tight argument is then left to the experience of trained readers who are familiar with this style, which leads to the loose logical exposition in Chinese thinking and expressions, considerably looser than that in English. From then on, with attempt to convey or perceive sort of “meaning beyond the flavor, the extremity beyond the rhythmic vitality” (*wei wai zhi zhi, yun wai zhi zhi*), “image beyond image, realm beyond realm” (*xiang wai zhi xiang, jing wai zhi jing*), this experience-centered, poetic wisdom-specified aesthetic realization gave rise to tacit understanding and hint-taking of the Chinese literary texts and their implications. Under such circumstances, most of the distinctive literary theories, let alone the classical Chinese literary writings, are written in poetic forms, containing profound theoretical arguments in elegant descriptions, narrations and argumentations. They are both literary theories and literary works in themselves. On the one hand, literary works have been written in the poetic style, such as songs and proses, parallel proses and poems; poetic notes on poems and prose have become the critical style and theoretical patterns. On the other hand, these philosophical literary texts are implicit, diffusive, and concise with emphasis on flavor, rhythm, and beauty. Thereafter, words or phrases to be used in these styles are often thought over time and time again in order to be immersed in the idea-image of the very word. No wonder there is a famous remark on the wonderfulness of literary texts in Chinese, “It does not seem to need in here any single word, yet the utmost flair is obtained.” (*bu zhuo yi zi, jin de feng liu*)

Originated in the poetic wisdom and expressions, Chinese literati have a strong sense of or preference for particular forms or regular patterns of language expressions. The peculiar interplay between ambiguity and regularity in the regular patterns of language expressions has come into being in the so-called “cultural-psychological structure” of China. For example, Chinese people show special love for the eight-line “regular poem” (*lü shi*) or the four-line poem (*jue ju*). Such poems have regular numbers of lines and each line has regular characters. Each poem has regular characters. Each poem has regular patterns of word tone and the lines tell the regular balance of contrasting concepts (parallelism). Poems in Tang Dynasty are the most telling manifestation of these regular features. Later, set melody patterns of Song Dynasty and looser arias of the Yuan Dynasty with the looser regular features are somewhat inheriting the regular features.

What’s more, literary texts and expressions containing figures of speech like metaphors, synaesthesia, symbols, nonce word, parody, allusion, transferred epithet, metonymy, puns, litotes, and epigrams have been to the liking of Chinese writers as the particular way to imply the indirect, oblique meanings. One common way is to insert a particular phrase, idiom, or a

line from another poet or classic writings to achieve a wealth of association. Another common form of achieving multi-connotations is to use the same rhyming words or terms as another person, especially as a poet did to respond to his text or poetry. Chinese people, especially the intellectuals, have a keen sense of understanding and interpreting the intertextuality or interplay of the messages between the lines, which serves as the taste and aesthetic pursuit.

The poetic expressions accompany the tradition of presenting reflective-spiritual aesthetic dimension of classical Chinese literature as the guidance of the ideological molding of the deep and the hidden in terms of the great aesthetic power. The reflective-spiritual aesthetic dimension is coordinated with the political system. China had practiced the civil service since the ancient times. Ever since “Spring and Autumn” times and Warring States, scholars had played some role in politics. During the Han Dynasty, the Confucianism served as the official ideology. Generally speaking, the emperors should follow the Confucian thoughts and officials should be good at Confucianism, the doctrines of which are often conveyed in the poems. During Sui and Tang Dynasty, cultivation in poetry was the essential prerequisite for handling the business of government administration. Poems conduct as the vehicle to transmit the ideological preference powerfully. Only the man who is good at poetry has a chance to enter into the government. Poetry and classical literary works had special insight into aesthetics. For example, Chinese painting is ameliorated by adding a poem onto it. In this way, the treatise of the ideological preference is aesthetically carved in the bottom of the heart of governors and their followers. To great extent, classical Chinese literature is the product of civil service.

For the sake of transmitting the aesthetic ideological preference, the Ancient Chinese emperors would consciously direct the change of the art of literature. In the long history, the appreciation, collection and circulation of poems are closely related to the authorities of the relevant national systems. Plenty of valuable pieces were collected by imperial family and followed by officials. The taste of folk collectors and scholars were greatly affected by the taste of royal court. The collection of royal court dominated the whole collection of poems, which had become the basic historical framework of the appreciation and collection of Chinese poems. For example, *the book of songs* is attributed to the system of “collecting poems to examine the practice of the citizens” (*cai shi guan feng*). The poems were collected for indirect persuasion and guidance. What’s more, the ancient Chinese officials applied the technique of selecting talents or officials by way of examining his poem based on the tradition of “poem expresses ideal”. So collecting poems had been a system to serve the politics of the State.

Just like what Confucius said: “Look at how he behaves now it is. Consider from what it comes. Examine in what a person would be at rest. How can a person remain hidden? —How can someone remain hidden?” (Confucius, 1992, p.19) The greatest force in the development of Chinese literary thought is the larger concerns of Confucian thought, which leads to hermeneutics that promises to reveal the complex conditions that inform human actions and words. *Analects* conveys Confucius’s thoughts and aesthetic attitude, which make some basic assumptions: (1) the correspondence between inner and outer truths, which identifies the inner by observing the outer; (2) the union of “Truth”, “Goodness” and “Beauty”. “Truth” emphasizes human emotions in “good genuineness” status; “Goodness” tends to mean “kind-heartedness” of “benevolence”; “Beauty” is considered to be the highest ideal, which is counted on to achieve the union of “Truth”, “Goodness” and “Beauty” in a harmonious emotional way. “A beautiful man” with the unification of “Truth”, “Goodness” and “Beauty” signifies the consistence of his words, actions and appearance. Actually, appearance is

considered as an important factor in selecting officials in the ancient China's civil service. Besides, the Confucian emphasizes on a self-improving and long-testing approach to their ideal realm, which will undergo the process of "cultivating the characters, regulating the family, ordering well their country and illustrating illustrious virtue throughout the states" political utility (In the Taoist perspective, the unity between nature and man is naturally accomplished.).

The mainstream aesthetic ideology of China can be illustrated with the dictum of "The Poem (shi) inspires ideal (zhi); singing (ge) makes language (yan) last long" (*shi yan zhi, ge yong yan.*) (*Book of Documents, Canon of Yao*) (*shang shu • yao dian*). As to this "the Poem inspires ideal" tradition, Stephen Owen (1992), a famous sinologist, comments:

This is the canonical statement of what poetry "is"...More important than its true historical provenance is the fact that it was understood to be the primary and most authoritative statement on *shih* throughout the traditional period. It should be emphasized that this is not "a theory" of poetry, it is almost as authoritative as if God had delivered a brief definition of poetry in Genesis. (p.27)

The great power of reflective-spiritual aesthetic dimension of classical Chinese literature can be specified in Chao pi's (ed., 2001) grand declaration in his writing *A Discourse in Literature*:

I would say that literary works (*wen zhang*) are the great cause to administer the business of a country, a splendor that does not decay. When a person's life comes to an end, glory goes no further than this body. To carry both to eternity, there is nothing comparable to the permanence of his literary work. (p.61)

Chao pi, the emperor of Wei Dynasty, distinguished as the literary emperor, intends to claim that the most essential and significant quality of writing is to transmit the most essential and excellent part in a person. In this case, literary works can endeavor him to bring his potential into full play, and inner nature can be exploited and empowered through words and literary works. Literary works are integrated into the business of administrating the country, which will make the writer permanent.

The essence of the reflection is the aesthetic ideology, the social ideology with aesthetic qualities, which will be affective and followed by civil citizens consciously and subconsciously. When the aesthetic ideology appears in the classical Chinese literature, it will penetrate into the sphere of the literati, and then into the sphere of the masses. Eventually, Classical Chinese literature incarnates the aesthetic dimension of the real life of the ancient society. Such incarnation in the literary works embodies the characteristics of activity, creativity and freedom, and in turn exerts great impact on the people's social and daily life. In the history of China, the literati are the paragon of gentleness. For example, writing brushes, ink sticks, paper and ink stones are the symbol of the literati, and even the unique brush pot, penholder, ink box, brush cleaners and so on become a plaything for the literati and are highly valued. The elegant behavior and taste of the literati had been transferred gradually to that of the masses in the process of reflective-spiritual integration between the literary works and the masses. The tastes of the literati have great influence on the characters of Chinese people.

The aesthetic ideology of the literati took on the more secular notion of moral and ritual manners. People's interests in the classics and practical circumstances eventually gave rise to the secularity of the literati's taste and manners, which leads to the "daily life aesthetics".

Through returning to daily life, the aesthetic ideology gains its practicality in areas related to daily issues, and establishes its value orientation towards “daily life aesthetics”, in which the classical literature will go beyond its position as knowledge ontology in literary world, represent as people’s image in daily life, and function as a natural way of existence through people’s words and activities. For example, *the book of Music in the Book of Rites* is an important document that expresses prominently musical ideas and ritual ideas of the Confucian school before the Qin Dynasty, and the measures of Confucianism will be taken to hold opposing forces in balance by way of rites and music:

For this reason the former kings set the prescriptions of rites and music and established proper measures for the people. By weeping in mourning clothes of hemp, they gave proper measures to funerals. By bell and drum, shield and battle-ax [for military dances] they gave harmony (ho) to expressions of happiness. By the cap and hairpin of the marriage ceremony, they distinguished male and female. By festive games and banquets they formed the correct associations between men. Rites gave the proper measure to the people’s mind; music made harmony in human sounds; government carried things out; punishments prevented [transgression]. When these four were fully achieved and not refractory, the royal way was complete. (Gong sunni, 1992, p.54)

In fact, the literary text serves also as an aesthetic way to transmit the social ideology in terms of aesthetic power of rites and music. Practicing the art of rites and music is necessarily a moral affair by integrating the aesthetic and moral value. Resting on an implicit belief about the ontology of the literary works, the prevailing use of the art of music (the poems are mainly sung out) entails transforming the self and finding a place with the Confucian tradition. The flowing of the aesthetic quality of the rites and music will go with Confucian ideological quality.

The issues of the aesthetic ideology exert great impact on the form of life and instruct us aesthetics’ practicality as applying intended preference to daily life. Going to “daily life aesthetics” from perceptual value ontology and the deep hidden aesthetic ideology, classical Chinese literature produces aesthetic dimension of daily life. The ultimate implication is realized in daily life with its abundant general value of moral and ritual manners for human beings.

DISCUSSIONS

Feng Youlan (1985) summarized a few typical linguistic features of Chinese philosophy:

Chinese philosophers are liable to use the thought-provoking and celebrated dictums, epigrams, and metaphor exemplifications to express their ideas. *Laozi* is composed by these terms and expressions; *Zhuangzi* is so for a great part. It’s quite obvious. ... dictums and epigrams must be short and the metaphorical exemplifications must contain no relations to its topic.” “The languages of Chinese philosophy are highly implicit, rather than explicit. It is not explicit, because it doesn’t signify the deductive concepts. The philosophers just tell what they see. Right for this reason, what he says is poly-semantic in few words. Right for this, his words is suggestive, not necessary to be clear. (p.14, pp.29-30)

The Epigrams, paradoxes or metaphorical exemplifications etc. in Chinese philosophy seem to be common, to be irrelevant, or to be paradoxical, which has profound impact on diversity of fields, particularly manifested in aesthetics of Chinese literature and arts. In these cases, “Implication” and “ambiguity” has been the aesthetic ideal of ancient Chinese literary arts,

such as Lu Ji's *The Verse of Literature Comments*(wen fu), Liu Xie's *Literary Mind and Carved Dragon*(wen xin diao long), Zhong Rong's *The Twenty-four Categories of Poems*(er shi si shi pin), Dufu's *Comments on the Poems with Six Quatrains*(xi wei liu jue ju), Yuan Haowen's *Comments on the thirty poems*(lun shi san shi shou).”

Consequently, the literary and aesthetic categories and concepts tend to be random, poly-semantic and fuzzy, which leads to the favorable realm of the unfathomable, wordless comprehension. Stephen Owen (1992), critically points out the basic issues of understanding and elaborating Chinese classical literature by analyzing the two aspects of the peculiar characteristics of Chinese terms in the introduction to his work *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought*:

Most scholars, both Chinese and Western, often lament the ‘vagueness’ of Chinese conceptual vocabulary.... In the Chinese tradition conceptual precision was not a value and therefore no one need maintain the pleasant illusion that a precise technical vocabulary existed.... The second reason that Chinese terms often sound vague to Western ears is that they simply do not correspond to the phenomena that the Western reader has learned to recognize. (p.5)

On the one hand, the Western tradition keeps the tension between the desire to get a precise definition and the desire to get vague in literary terms while the Chinese tradition just values the resonance of vagueness. In Chinese tradition, the meaning and the implication of a term is stabilized by its uses in the texts, supposed to be known by everyone, especially the trained readers. On the other hand, the Chinese term embodies a distinction or a concern that is absent in English terms. Different from the Western traditions, the Chinese tradition relies on the context of the exact model or text to identify terms, such as a genre or style. It's true that a term may strike many readers as impossibly broad, but the Chinese term embodies a distinction in the context to tell the particular normative style, generic norm and other aspects of the normative form. The model text plays the role of defining the term. Consequently, classical Chinese literature and its aesthetic culture are isolated from its capability to be understood by foreign people as well as most Chinese people.

Just like what Peter Hacker (2002) says: “The only proper method of analyzing thought consists in the analysis of language.” (p.10) Without understanding its language, how can we understand and interpret its thoughts and culture? Classical Chinese literature and its aesthetic culture constitute of a set of terms or expressions revealing its own long histories, complex resonances and cultural will. So analyzing the usage of important terms, the more detailed and particular discussion of terms and expressions may be helpful for both foreign and modern Chinese readers to understand and appreciate Classical Chinese literature and its aesthetic culture. The authors of *Aesthetics and Language*, the programmatic works of analytic aesthetics, emphatically point out that confusion caused by language analog is one of the fundamental errors of traditional aesthetics. It is especially depictive of Chinese terms and expression in the classical Chinese literature.

To respond to the challenges of interpreting the rich indeterminacy of Classical Chinese literature and its aesthetic culture, we have to articulate the meanings and special forms of the text from the perspective of language analysis. But it is not enough. Sometimes, when translated with equivalents, the terms or expressions may lose its cultural characteristics; when interpreted with detailed language analysis to convey the connotations, they may lose the everlasting power of the original linguistic expressions; when illustrated to inform the cultural implications, they may lose the beauty of elegant forms. This is why some foreign scholars call Chinese aesthetic thoughts as “Chinese mystery”. To understand the literary

texts and its aesthetic conception, we have to understand the culture itself. It's necessary to clarify the peculiar cultural historicity and the philosophical origin, namely, go further from the linguistic dimension to the cultural dimension. As for this, Karl-Heinz Phol (2006) suggested:

Entering into a conversation with these texts, we also have to enter into a conversation with the culture itself, with the underlying cultural or aesthetic patterns. This intercultural conversation may lead to a twofold new understanding: (1) Understanding how the different linguistic and philosophical background has shaped the communicational quality of texts; (2) understanding how these literary or poetic (and philosophical) text have shaped the way people relate and communicate with one another, i.e. how it has formed their behavior or mentality. (p.106)

As for the preference of regularity and rules in terms and expressions, the origin can be traced to the Zhou culture of the Confucian tradition which has dominated China since Zhou Dynasty. Rules and regulations can be found in all walks of life, especially in various ceremonies and the ritualized way of expressing politeness. Confucius, the preserver and restorer of the Zhou culture and the founder of Confucian culture, advocates the training procedure of each one's personality, that is, "to find inspiration in the poems, to hold a place through ritual and to achieve perfection through music". In this process, regularity and rules are obeyed and the ritualistic regularity plays a role of seemingly laws or rules.

In order to understand and interpret the semiotic system of Chinese aesthetic culture, we'd rather enter into the "horizon of significance" of the culture beyond the text, the cultural background through which things become meaningful. So it is destined that in order to really cognize and construct the aesthetic conception of the ontological foundation of classical Chinese literature, it is necessary to hold it in a holistic way.

In his *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein (1958) used some significant holistic concepts, such as "language game", "family resemblance" :

Consider for example the proceedings that we call "games". I mean board-games, card-games, ball-games, Olympic games, and so on. What is common to them all?—Don't say: "There *must* be something common, or they would not be called 'games'" —but *look and see* whether there is anything common to all.—For if you look at them you will not see something that is common to all, but similarities, relationships, and a whole series of them at that. To repeat: don't think, but look! Look!—Look for example at board-games, with their multifarious relationships. (p. 31)

Wittgenstein's games don't mean the static games. Instead, they are dynamic since they will change according to the rules. There's no common nature for all the games, but only the resemblance and similarity. "Family resemblance" entails a whole series of similarities and relationship. He exemplified the theories with daily games, stressed again and again that it should be "look", not "think". Wittgenstein's holistic philosophy emphasizes a more realistic and opening understanding of philosophical and aesthetic issues, typically elaborated in the concepts "Family Resemblance", "language games". Therefore, if the holistic methodology is merged into the meaningful themes of classical Chinese literature and its aesthetic implications, more inspiring sparks will be stimulated by means of interactive impact.

Richard Shusterman (2006) explores a great deal of promising overlap between pragmatism and Chinese aesthetics, which share the same theme: Philosophy is primarily directed at the aims of preserving, cultivating and perfecting human life, from which an aesthetic corollary is drawn:

The highest function of aesthetics is to improve our experience of art and beauty, rather than to produce verbal definitions of these concepts. Moreover, to improve our experience of art does not simply mean increasing our personal enjoyment and understanding of artworks. For art is not only a source of inner pleasure (important a value as that is); it is also a practical way of giving grace and beauty to the social function of everyday life.... Art is also a crucial means of ethical education that can improve both individual and society. I think the Confucian insistence on the importance of music and ritual (li) makes this aesthetic model of education clear. (310)

This concern with human life resonates with classical Chinese literature translated and emphasized by Stephen Owen (1992):

Kuan-chü, is the virtue (*tê**) of the Queen Consort and the beginning of the *feng**. It is the means by which the world is influenced (*feng**) and by which the relations between husband and wife are made correct (*cheng**). Thus it is used in smaller communities, and it is used in larger states. “Airs” are “Influence”; it is “to teach.” By influence it stirs them; by teaching it transforms them. (Tzu-hsia, 1992, p.38)

Guan ju (*Kuan-chü*) is a ballad or folk song from *the book of songs*, the collection of the earliest poems of China, which serves as a textbook to conduct the teaching of Confucius’s politics, ethics, aesthetics and natural philosophy. This poem *Guan ju* tells the moral canons in terms of a metaphor, that is, the bird, “ju”, just keeps loyalty to and respects his or her spouse when he or she finds his ideal one. This is a philosophical love poem, aimed at promoting aesthetic and moral standards of Confucianism. The aesthetic in our life is not inconsequential triviality any more. Maybe, there is likes and dislikes of aesthetic and moral standards of Confucianism, but when they have this manifest form, we will gain something by probing its existence and exploring its significance for raising consciousness towards our aesthetic attitude and response invoke.

It is with the value orientation based on “life” under the historical and cultural background of the twenty-first century, in which the state of the human survival gains insight, that classical Chinese literature and its aesthetic concerns can create a better future for mankind in its modernization and globalization. In this sense, Ludwig Wittgenstein in his later period focused on ordinary language philosophy, and the concept “form of life” in his masterpiece *Philosophical investigation* has been repeatedly stressed. What’s more, “form of life” is repeatedly quoted and interpreted, constituting the core of his philosophical thoughts. In addition, in his *1914-1916 Notes* it is also for times he calls on: “Live happily!” So, if Wittgenstein’s later philosophy is concerned with ordinary language, his real concern is the “daily life”, which is the true meaning for Wittgenstein to emphasize the meaningful use of language. The real internal stimulus is that the philosophy of Wittgenstein carries a form of life, “to imagine a language means to imagine a form of life”. The significance of truth lies in that it is “in agreement with form of life. “form of life” gives the philosophy and aesthetics the most extensive content, and reverts its highest values back to the real life, which is in tune with the historical trend of today’s society, in which the material conditions of life has been improved and people’s aesthetic needs keep increasing.

CONCLUSION

From the introduction and discussion demonstrated above, terms or concepts listed below are considered significant in the sense of decoding and enhancing classical Chinese literature and its aesthetic conception.

Sense perception and penetrative experience: (*zhi jue ti wu*) Instead of emphasis on theoretical presentation of reasoning and knowledge, this Chinese aesthetic concept elaborates the feeling or sense of poetic atmosphere or feeling over things that move the heart or insight into the subtle suggestive beauty.

Presentation of both poetic expressions and beautiful human sentiment (*wen qing bing mao*): This Chinese aesthetic term emphasizes both authentic sensibility to wisdom and beauty inherent in life and the forms of poetic language expressions in various genres of literature and literary theories.

Harmony of heaven and man (*tian ren he yi*): This dominant trend of Chinese aesthetic conception probes into the way of life, revealing a kind of life or moral aesthetics on the basis of the unity of both man and heaven and both man and society.

Ideal of spiritual accomplishment (*jing jie*): This aesthetic experience exhibits the pursuit of life spirit and force, which is always guided to be divinely transcended into the highest level of self-accomplishment, forgetting oneself and achieving the unity of the poetic wisdom and the spiritual, emotional and artistic dimensions of human life.

Dynamic unification of words and behavior, knowledge and action or theory and practice (*zhi xing tong he*): The course of this unification is to show that one experience it according to his philosophical belief and put it into practice sincerely with emphasis on the consistence of knowledge, theory, words, action, behavior and moralities. It aims to ultimately cultivate one to become a person of both talent and morality.

The list of such concepts and terms is long, but a few of them selected above will be shedding light. Evidently, these nouns and adjectives with strong emotional connotations and profound implications have to be contemplated with the concrete works of writing and social and cultural background. They are different from terms of systemizing abstract notions or clearly defined concepts in Western English language. With these few examples of classical Chinese literature and its aesthetic conception, I choose to explore a perspective of enhancing aesthetic vigor and elevate our sensitivity and intelligence of appreciating beauty. The phenomenal, reflective-spiritual and moral ritual dimensions of classical Chinese literature as a whole in the historical and cultural background have been strongly emphasized. What's more, as a result of the common "life form", the aesthetic essence of classical Chinese literature will be demonstrated to serve as a key to the development of transcultural studies and improvement of the quality of life.

We call for the perspectives of approaching classical Chinese literature and its aesthetic conception on which we base our arguments for a better life on spiritual and living aspects found in the whole universe, animate or inanimate. Accordingly, we need a comprehensive reflection on the essential dimensions of the ontological foundations of classical Chinese literature and corresponding strategies of approaching it to keep abreast of the new development. Now, with the approaching of aesthetic generalization era, everyday aesthetic taste and aesthetic sense will play a more and more important role in the existential state and the quality of life.

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